

Socialist Labor Party

OF AUSTRALIA.

Report to International Congress Copenhagen, August, 1910.

Greetings from the Socialist Labor Party of Australia

COMRADES OF ALL LANDS :

OWING to our financial inability to send a delegate and thus be directly represented at the International Congress, the following Statement respecting the Socialist Movement in Australia, as viewed from the revolutionary standpoint. It has been a matter of regret with us that it has not yet been possible—distance and expense preventing us—to have had direct delegates at any international congress. The spongers and adventurers who divide the working-class movement in this country for their personal financial gain are principally responsible for this condition of affairs, which time will remedy.

The Socialist Labor Party is the pioneer and only Socialist Party in Australia, and was founded by and is successor to the Australian Socialist League, the first Socialist organisation established in this country. Ten years ago our Party entered the political arena at the first Federal election, nominating the full ticket for the Senate in the State of New South Wales, the whole State being one electorate, adult suffrage prevailing. Four successive Senate elections have been contested, as these elections afford the best gauge of the class-conscious Socialist convictions of the workers in the State. The vote has been a varying one, the last election, on April 13 this year, gave our highest candidate 13,601 and our lowest 8,432. We nominated three candidates—the full ticket—and we regard the lowest vote polled as approximately the class-conscious vote of the State. Our platform has only one plank: social revolution. We strive to concentrate the workers' political power at the ballot-box on the one paramount issue: the establishment of the Socialist Republic. Our attitude is unbending and uncompromising. We ask for votes only from those who fully and unreservedly accept our principles and agree with our methods. We therefore claim our lowest vote as representative. No other State in this so-called Australian Commonwealth had any Socialist candidates in the field.

Our organisation is composed exclusively of members of the working class, though of course our rules do not exclude others, but we find in practice that the petty bourgeois "Labor" party and freakish pseudo-socialist organisations attract the more radical and sentimentalist factions of the exploiters. Our membership is active and determined though small and so far only organised in the two States of New South Wales and Victoria. Our official press organ, "The People," is absolutely owned and controlled by the Party, and is published weekly.

In common with the Socialist Labor Party of the United States, Gt. Britain, and Canada, our Party advocates revolutionary industrial unionism on the basis of the original Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World, and brought into existence the I.W.W. Clubs of Australia. These clubs control their own affairs and are not affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party or any other political organisation. Splendid propaganda work has been done by the I.W.W. Clubs which have succeeded in making the preamble and principles of revolutionary industrial unionism well known in Australia, and have had, and still have an ever-growing influence in the ranks of the workers. The Socialist Labor Party of Australia accepts the revolutionary Socialist program, but has arrived at the decision that Socialism can only be achieved by the working-class consciously and intelligently organised for revolutionary purposes in the industrial plants of production, and thus possessing the economic might to back up and enforce its ballot for the collective ownership and control of the means of life.

Up till two or three years ago the Socialist Labor Party held the field as indisputably and admittedly the only Socialist political party in Australia. Three years since, however, a new organisation was launched under the name of the Socialist Federation of Australasia. A loose Federation of two or three scattered groups of utopians and sentimentalist

under the domination of two or three fluent speakers and writers who exploit them for personal material ends; there was no justification whatever for the formation of this would-be rival body to the existing Socialist Labor Party. The principles, methods, and tactics of the Socialist Labor Party are admittedly scientific and correct and the wire-pullers of the S.F. of A. have simply sought to obtain the results of years of persistent agitational work by a small band of working-class men and women who now find a fresh element of confusion introduced to the minds of the workers by these unscrupulous professionals and their dupes. That this characterisation is not too strong will be proved to the members of the International Congress by the following quotation of the official resolution of the so-called Socialist Federation of Australasia on political action (July, 1909):

"That no member of the S.F.A. shall stand as, vote for, or support other than a revolutionary Socialist, for political or municipal positions, UNLESS OTHERWISE ADVISED AT TIME OF AN ELECTION BY THE GENERAL EXECUTIVE OR SPECIAL CONFERENCE CONVENED FOR THAT PURPOSE."

Is any comment necessary upon the claims of a "party" which at the discretion of its wire-pullers may thus be used for non-socialist, i.e., anti-working class politics? It will be remembered by many who were at Stuttgart that, at the last International Congress the S.F.A. was represented by a Mr. Victor Kroemer, a gentleman whose eccentricities, including spiritualistic prophesying on the floor of the congress, brought ridicule upon the Socialist movement in Australia. This year it is stated that Messrs. T. Mann and H. Borax are to represent this body at the congress. Neither of these men have any claim to speak on behalf of the Australian working-class or the Socialist movement in this country. They are not domiciled here, and are at present members, presumably, not of the S.F.A., but of other organisations in the countries in which they reside. It is true that both these persons are eminently fit to represent the corrupt and freakish S.F. of A., but we protest against their admission as in any sense representative of Socialism or the organised Socialist movement in this country.

It is a question for the Congress as to whether even bona fide direct delegates from such a conglomeration as the S.F.A. should be admitted.

The International Socialist Congresses have repeatedly denounced and repudiated the "general strike" mania, especially

with the workers disorganised. Yet at the end of last year the Executive of the S.F.A. called upon the working class in this State to "meet force with force," and declare a "general strike" when the promulgators of this insane policy knew very well that if acted upon it would only lead those workers who responded into the capitalist shambles. As a matter of fact, a few misguided enthusiasts who took isolated action along the lines advocated by the S.F. of A. are in gaol now as a consequence of an utterly futile and mischievous demonstration which played straight into the hands of the authorities. The chief instigator of this policy and executive officer of the Federation, Mr. H. E. Holland, however, escaped the consequences of his own policy, walking on the footpath or side-walk whilst his followers in the roadway defied the police and were arrested and punished. Can the Congress permit representatives of such a body to be seated in its ranks? The actions of those responsible for the tactics of the S.F. of A. have brought discredit on the name of Socialism; its wild propaganda of the general strike without organisation or preparation for such an upheaval, proclaims it anarchistic, and unfit to be regarded as Socialist by the Congress. We are on the spot here, and know the position in Australia, and we submit the foregoing as a mere recital of facts which should suffice for the guidance of our international comrades. The presence of Messrs. T. Mann and H. Borax as proxy delegates to your Congress is designed to aid in hampering the growth of the Socialist organisation here, the Socialist Labor Party, by enabling the professional element in the S.F. of A. to claim international standing for their Federation. The International Congress will assuredly not aid the cause of Socialism by allowing itself to be thus used as a decoy.

With regard to general conditions Australia, spite of the comparatively small manufacturing development capitalism in all its viciousness exists here, and the class war manifests itself bitterly, despite all the pious aspirations and efforts of the advocates of "industrial peace." Although this vast continent as an area of nearly three million square miles, and a population of less than four and a half millions, i.e., a density of population of less than two to the square mile, or about one-sixtieth of the population of Europe, despite all this coupled with enormous natural resources, the economic effects of the profit-mongering system are felt here as elsewhere. Trusts and combines have developed proportionately to the population. Wages are on the downgrade and the cost of living is appreciating. The various nostrums of Compulsory Arbitration, Wages

Boards, etc., established throughout Australasia have proved as ineffective and vicious as the Socialist Labor Party predicted they would be. The spirit of unionism has been sapped by these insidious means promulgated by the petty bourgeois and craft unionist alliance in the so-called political "Labor" party, to such an extent that the trade unions to-day submit tamely to the gaoing of strike officials, and even vote into office the Labor politicians who paved the way for, and are indeed primarily responsible for penal enactments against strikes and strikers. The trade unions are tied up by separate agreements with the employers thus preventing solidarity of action, and as a rule strikes only take place, when they do occur, by the revolt of the rank and file against the labor ^{representatives} of capitalism, the union officials, who also generally take the first opportunity of selling the men and settling the strike. In New South Wales it is a penal offence to strike, and during the recent coal strike, an additional penal act, generally known as the Coercion Act, was rushed through Parliament in a few hours, an act worthy of Russia or of Ireland in the eighties. Several strike leaders were gaoled and many others heavily fined. The industrial law is also supposed to subject capitalists to penalties for "lock-outs." In practice this, however, does not act, and is not intended to act effectively. No capitalist has yet been gaoled and only one has been fined—and an absurd nominal penalty at that. The conspiracy laws are stretched here and interpreted to include organisers of strikers, and gaoled strikers are ironed as though they were vile and desperate criminals of the lowest type. The police can, and do, enter union meeting rooms, and take possession of union documents, etc. All this in the name of Australian democracy, which our comrades in other lands may rely is a delusion and a fraud.

The main responsibility for this deplorable state of the Labor movement in Australia rests upon the pure and simple trade unions and their hybrid political expression: the Australian Labor party. The Australian craft unions are of the same type as the British and must not be confounded with the class-inspired revolutionary unionism of European countries. They are in fact more akin to the Catholic trade unions specially organised in some countries as a barrier against Socialist advancement. Brotherhood of Capital and Labor, identity of interest between the classes, recognition of the right to exploit coupled with demands for a "fair" wage, and minor concessions in working conditions: this is the creed and platform of these or-

ganisations of slave-inspired wage-slaves. Compelled to enter the political arena, these servile organisations were easily captured by the petty bourgeois section of the capitalist class and the present political Labor party is the result. This party of political poltroons and time-servers is a standing illustration of the fate which overtakes movements of the workers uninspired by the guiding light of social revolution. For twenty years the mass of the organised Australian workers, organised yet sectionalised in craft unions, and thus disorganised from the class standpoint, have struggled to obtain political unity through the political Labor party. They have achieved it. At the Federal elections on April 13 of this year, the Labor party was returned to power in both Houses of Parliament with an overwhelming majority. And this party stands for a Reformist program which includes Compulsory Arbitration—which necessarily involves penal enactments against strikers, or the compulsion fails.

Land-Tax Proposals, with exemptions up to £5000: a proposal designed wholly in the interest of the small capitalist farmer who is usually the worst and most grinding exploiter of his laborers.

Conscription, or as it termed here, compulsory military training. The Labor party possesses the infamy of having introduced the beginnings of compulsory militarism on this continent; and only through political labor-influence over the drugged and deluded workers has this social crime been perpetrated here.

Despite the fact that the class-struggle is denied, both by action and in speech, by the "Labor" leaders, they, in conjunction with the capitalist press, endeavor to keep their hold over the workers by posing as a "step-at-a-time" Socialist party, and the growth of knowledge forced upon the people by incessant S.L.P. and I.W.W. propaganda has compelled this Labor party to declare for a bastard nationalisation policy, i.e., State capitalism, which they endeavor to persuade the workers is Socialism! The experience of the workers already engaged in State monopolies, e.g., railways, postal service, &c., is sufficient to show the futility of such a "cure" for capitalism. Meantime, however, the less-informed workers are captured for voting purposes by such baits. The hypocrisy of the Political Labor Party is well illustrated by the fact that whilst claiming that as industries become monopolised they should be nationalised (on a strictly capitalist basis), in order to gradually achieve Socialism, they also agitate for legal enactment and admini-

strative action to prevent industries becoming trustified!

The claim of the Australian Labor Party to be Socialist are, it will be seen, utterly fraudulent. It is indeed more reactionary than the other capitalist parties and it has been described by the "Catholic Press" the chief organ of Australian Catholicism, with which the Labor party is in more or less covert alliance—as:

"The only political party which can in truth be called conservative. It alone can offer an impassible barrier to the forces of revolution."

The policy of the so-called Labor party is indeed to endeavor to mitigate the extreme rigors of capitalism, in order to keep the workers in leading strings whilst building up and conserving the small property holders and exploiters as a buttress of capital against social revolution. This policy is, of course, hopelessly utopist, doomed to failure by the irresistible progress of economic evolution which is preparing the workers to accept the revolutionary message of the Socialist Labor Party.

The Socialist Labor Party of Australia calls the attention of the Congress to the futility of Reformism as exemplified by its crass and abject failure in Australia the land of experimental industrial social reform. We urge that the failure and treachery of mere parliamentary "socialism" demonstrates the need for revolutionary industrial unionism, national and international, organisation for forcibly expropriating the expropriators, political action being used not to reform or administer capitalism but as a revolutionary weapon to assist in destruction of the capitalist State. We further urge the importance of the anti-militarist propaganda. We are anti-patriots, and we claim the support of our fellow-socialists the world over in our battle against militarism here and elsewhere. We have to regretfully inform the Congress that the pathetic utterances of some who bulk

largely before the International Movement as leaders of European Socialism have been used against Socialism by the Labor party advocates of Conscription in Australia. Certain votes of the German Party in the past, and a certain speech of Bebel, the anti-German writings of Blatchford, the advocacy by the English Social-Democratic Federation of the armed nation and citizen army: the nationalistic outbursts of Jaures et al in France. These freakish excrescences upon the Socialist movement are used here to gull and delude the working class into becoming food for powder and targets for bullets in the interest of the capitalist exploiters. We desire an authoritative pronouncement by the Congress against militarism, nationalism, patriotism. We cordially endorse, and as far as we have the opportunity emulate, the magnificent campaign of anti-militarism of our esteem comrade, Gustave Herve, and his friends and associates. The influence of their propaganda is not confined to France. We can answer for the renewed inspiration which their work and thought has given to the revolutionary movement here, and we desire to see the International Congress adopt this active and forward policy for the purpose of undermining the physical force upon which capitalist law and order and property rests, whilst building up the economic union of the working class for effective revolutionary action in the near future.

Greetings to the Revolutionary Workers.

GENERAL EXECUTIVE,

Socialist Labor Party of Australia,
Headquarters: 16 George-street West
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

JAS. O. MORONEY,

General Secretary.

June 17, 1910.

